

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUALA 02353 220757Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 /079 W
-----080479 221251Z /41

R 220713Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3055
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE KUALA LUMPUR 2353

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MY
SUBJ: HARUN GOES TO JAIL

REF : KUALA LUMPUR 1758 (DTG 020855Z MAR 78)

1. MALAYSIAN PRESS MARCH 21 REPORTED DATUK HARUN IDRIS WAS
REMOVED FROM HOSPITAL MARCH 20 AND TAKEN TO KUALA LUMPUR PUDU
JAIL.

2. AS REPORTED REFTTEL, THE FORMER CHIEF MINISTER AND UMNO
YOUTH CHIEF HAD OSTENSIBLY BEEN HELD CAPTIVE BY HIS ZEALOUS
SUPPORTERS WHO PREVENTED THE POLICE FROM INCARCERATING HARUN,
BUT HE EVENTUALLY SURRENDERED TO POLICE CUSTODY AND UNDERWENT
SURGERY TO REMOVE A CYST FROM HIS LEG.

3. WHILE HARUN WAS RECOVERING FROM SURGERY, THE KING REJECTED AN
APPEAL FOR HIS PARDON ON MARCH 7, AND PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN
ONN REITERATED A STERN WARNING TO ALL TO RESPECT THE RULE OF
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PAGE 02 KUALA 02353 220757Z

LAW, AND NOT TO TAKE ACTION THAT WOULD ENDANGER PUBLIC SECURITY.
AS WE UNDERSTAND IT HARUN IS NOW BARRED FROM HOLDING PUBLIC
OFFICE FOR FIVE YEARS.

4. LOCAL OBSERVERS AGREE THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S FIRM BUT
UNPROVOCATIVE STANCE WAS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE AT DEFUSING A POTENT-
IALLY EXPLOSIVE SITUATION. FROM THE OUTSET THE PRIME MINISTER

MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE WOULD NOT SUCCUMB TO PRESSURE FROM ANY QUARTER, NOR ALLOW THE LAW TO BE COMPROMISED IN ANY FASHION WHATSOEVER. A NUMBER OF OBSERVERS HAD PREDICTED THAT THE POPULAR HARUN WOULD NEVER BE FORCED TO SERVE EVEN A DAY OF HIS SENTENCE, BUT THE PRIME MINISTER OBVIOUSLY WAS SINCERE WHEN HE STATED THAT NO ONE IS ABOVE THE LAW. IN THIS REGARD, MALAYSIAN COURTS RULED ON MARCH 14 THAT HARUN'S BAILORS FORFEIT A TOTAL OF M\$150,000 FOR NOT PRODUCING HARUN AT THE SPECIFIED TIME.

5. COMMENT: DESPITE THE FACT THAT DISGRUNTLED UMNO FACTIONS REMAIN DISPLEASED WITH WHAT THEY SEE AS "VICTIMIZATION" OF MALAY "HERO" DATUK HARUN, THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS ASSOCIATES HAVE EMERGED CLEAR WINNERS FROM THE CONFRONTATION. THE GOVERNMENT'S INSISTENCE ON UPHOLDING RULE OF LAW, AND ITS WELL-PUBLICIZED DETERMINATION TO USE SECURITY FORCES TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC ORDER AND RACIAL PEACE, HAVE IMPROVED ITS CREDIBILITY IN MOST CIRCLES. FINALLY, FEARS OF THOSE WHO FELT GOM MOVES AGAINST HARUN WOULD INCUR SERIOUS POLITICAL COSTS HAVE BEEN ALLAYED TO SOME EXTENT BY MARCH 11 KELANTAN ELECTION RESULTS WHERE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S RULING COALITION AND ITS ELECTORAL ALLIES RECEIVED UNEXPECTEDLY STRONG MANDATE.

MILLER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARRESTS, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KUALA02353
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780126-0166
Format: TEL
From: KUALA LUMPUR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780338/aaaabgav.tel
Line Count: 84
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7566c1bf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 KUALA LUMPUR 1758
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3241661
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HARUN GOES TO JAIL
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MY, (IDRIS, DATUK HARUN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7566c1bf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014